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CREOLE FOLK-LORE FROM JAMAICA.¹

I. PROVERBS.

SINCE the abolition of slavery in 1837, in Jamaica, the black man has flourished and multiplied; nature, for the trouble of gathering, supplies him with as much as he needs; yams from the earth, bread-fruit from the trees, oil for his person, bananas and oranges for his desert; he requires little more, and therefore is found nearer to his original African state than in the more difficult climate of the southern States of the Union. The island contains about five hundred thousand blacks, seventy-five thousand "browns," that is to say mulattoes or "colored people" (an expression never used in Jamaica), and only twelve or fifteen thousand whites; the latter are chiefly of English descent, as are also the browns, at least the lighter portion. The language is English, or as near an approach to English as the Jamaica negro has yet achieved; his speech is rather trying to unaccustomed ears, and for its comprehension needs a sympathy acquired only by intercourse. During fifty years, schools have been at work, fostered by government, by churches and missionary societies, while for a longer time has continued the education of contact with the Anglo-Saxon, in the relations of business and society, as evidence by the presence of those seventy-five thousand "browns." Here is a wide field for the student of folk-lore; it would be of interest to compare and divide, separating what is English from what is African. In the present article attention can be paid only to a single phase of this material, namely, to Creole proverbs.

1. Nyanga mek crab go sideways. (*Nyanga* seems to be a term of African origin, meaning pride or superciliousness; the idea is that too frequent turning of the cold shoulder has developed into compulsory lateral progression.)

2. Consequential mek crab hab no head. ("Consequential" is equivalent to pride.)

3. Crab walk too much, him lose him claw.

4. When cow-tail cut off, God-almighty brush fly fe' him. (Apparently another way of saying "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.")

¹ Read before the Boston Branch of the American Folk-Lore Society, January 17, 1895.

5. Bull horn never too heaby fe' him head. (The back is fitted to its burden.)

6. Dog hate to min' owner him sleep widout supper.

7. Spit in de sky, it fall in your face. (A maxim of prudence.)

8. Pig say, "Mammy, wha' mek your mout' long so?" Him say, "Ah, my pickny, dat same ting wha' mek my mout' long so, will mek yours long too." (This recognition of the theory of heredity will appeal to those familiar with the common tropic breed of swine, which is long-nosed.)

9. Do for do for no harm. (One good turn deserves another.)

10. Fowl weary, hawk catch him chicken. (Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.)

11. Man no trabble, him no know puss hab cock eye. (Illustrative of the advantages of a wide education.)

12. Big blanket mek man sleep late.

13. Too much sit down broke trousers.

14. Shut mout', no catch fly. (A plea for silence.)

15. Ebery day bucket go da well, one day bottom drop out.

16. John Crow want fe' go nort side. Why you tink breeze come tek him? (The "north side," that is, islands in the direction of Falmouth, is likely to be the direction from which the breeze blows; the order of nature is not to be reversed to please the individual.)

17. What costs notin' gib good weight.

18. Cunnin' better than 'trong. (Wisdom is superior to strength.)

19. Patien' man dribe jackass.

20. Tek time watch ants, you see how him mek. (Everything is to be learned by observation, including the habits of animals.)

21. One time da mistek, two time a purpose. (The repetition of an error implies wilful fault.)

22. One time fool no fool, two time fool him da fool.

23. Snak bite you, you see groun' lizard you run.

24. Ef you 'fraid fe' frog, you run from crab.

25. When towel turn tablecloth, dere's no bearin' wid it. (Directed against "codfish aristocracy.")

26. Rock-'tone ribber bottom neber know sun hot.

27. Ef you trow rock-'tone in a hog-'tye, da pig dat cry "quee quee," da' him it knock.

28. John Crow tink him pickny white.

29. Belly full, potato hab kin.

30. Hog run fe' him life, dog run fe' him charac'ter.

31. Today fe' you, tomorrow fe' me. (Every dog has his day.)

32. Trubble catch man, monkey breeches fit him.

33. Calabash neber bear pumpkin.

34. Crab walk too much, him get in kutakoo. (Kutakoo, a kind of crab-soup.)

35. Hansom face an' good luck don't trabble da same pass.

36. When a man talk too much, him pay him fader debt.

37. Ants foller fat.

38. Trubble dey in de bush, Nancy come bring a home. (Anansi, African word for spider, here as mischievous sprite.)

39. Wha' de good of edication, ef he got no sense?

40. Monkey say, wha' in your mout' not fe' you. (There's many a slip between the cup and the lip.)

41. Ebery day Dehil help tief, one day God help watchman.
42. Man no done climb hill, no trow way your 'tick.
43. Man no done grow, no laugh at da long man.
44. Married hab teet'. (This hint at the possible infelicities of married life seems to convey a meaning similar to our phrase, that remorse biteth like a serpent.)
45. Dark night no hab gub'nor.
46. Finga' sore, you can't cut it, trow 'way.
47. Trubble neber blow shell. (Sorrow gives no warning.)
48. Sof'ly sof'ly catch monkey.
49. Wha' fool de fowl but cockroach.
50. When cockroach mek dance, him no ask fowl.
51. Duppy know who fe' frighten. (Duppy, ghost.)
52. Day more long dan rope.
53. Ef ears grow eber so big, dey can't pass head.
54. Man dead, grass grow at him door mout'.
55. Fus' word, go to law.
56. Cotton tree fall down, nanny goat jump ober him.
57. Ef you miss Harry, catch him frock.
58. When puss lib well, him say ratta meat bitter.
59. When dog lib well, him go da broad pass, go trubble cow.
60. Cuss cuss neber bore hole in 'kin. (Hard words break no bones.)
61. One tief no like see noder tief carry long bag.

62. Dog hab shine teet' him b'long to butcher.
63. Ef you want fe' taste de women's soup, 'cratch him back.
64. Me dead hog a'ready, me no min' hot water.
65. Foller fashion, broke neck.
66. By and by very long rope.
67. Sofely ribber run deep.
68. Coward man keep soun' bone.
69. Neber min' mek ship run ashore.
70. Don' care keep big house.
71. When dainty lady lib well, him tek a pin fe' eat peas.
72. Greedy choke puppy.
73. Hen neber wash him chicken too hard.
74. Pickny mus' creep before him walk.
75. Bull ole, you tek wis' wis' tie him. (Wis' wis', a straw.)
76. Jackass dead, you tek him hed-'kull so hole' honey.

Another phase of Creole Folk-Lore in Jamaica is to be found in the "Nancy Stories" (African Anansi, spider), which will receive mention in a future article.

William C. Bates.